Please cancel Claims 17-18, without prejudice.

Please amend Claims 1-16 as follows:

1. (Amended) A hybrid promoter comprising:

(a) an enhancer region of a strong and ubiquitous promoter/enhancer, and

(b) a promoter region that allows specific expression in smooth muscle cells,

wherein said enhancer region and said promoter region are less than 1 kb apart.

2. (Amended) The hybrid promoter according to claim 1, wherein the enhancer region is selected from the group consisting of: the enhancer region of the cytomegalovirus immediate-early (CMV-IE) gene; the enhancer region of the rous sarcoma virus L TR (RSV-L TR); the enhancer region of the SV40 virus; and the enhancer region of the EF1a gene.

3. (Amended) The hybrid promoter according to claim 2, wherein the enhancer region of the cytomegalovirus immediate-early (CMV-IE) gene is the human cytomegalovirus (hCMV-IE).

4. (Amended) The hybrid promoter according to claim 1, wherein the promoter region comprises the promoter of the gene encoding α-actin of smooth muscle cells (SMact), or the promoter of the SM22 gene.

5. (Amended) A hybrid promoter comprising:

(a) an enhancer region of the human cytomegalovirus immediate-early (hCMV-IE) gene, and

(b) a promoter of the gene encoding the α-actin of smooth muscle cells (SMact),

wherein said enhancer region and said promoter are less than 1 kb apart.

6. (Amended) A hybrid promoter comprising:

(a) an enhancer region of the human cytomegalovirus immediate-early (hCMV-IE) gene, and

(b) a promoter of the SM22 gene,

wherein said enhancer region and said promoter are less than 1 kb apart.

7. (Amended) The hybrid promoter according to claim 1, wherein the promoter region comprises a basal promoter and a sequence conferring tissue specificity that is derived from the SMact promoter, the SM22 promoter, or from a combination of the SMact promoter and the SM22 promoter .

8. (Amended) An expression cassette comprising a nucleic acid that is complementary to an RNA or encodes a polypeptide of interest, that is placed under the control of a hybrid promoter of Claim 1.

9. (Amended) The expression cassette according to claim 8, further comprising a signal for termination of transcription.

10. (Amended) The expression cassette according to claim 8, wherein the nucleic acid encodes a protein selected from the group consisting of a protein involved in the cell cycle, a protein that induces apoptosis, a protein capable of modifying the proliferation of smooth muscle cells, a protein that induces angiogenesis, and a transcription factor.

11. (Amended) A vector that comprises:

(a) a hybrid promoter comprising:

(i) an enhancer region of a strong and ubiquitous promoter/enhancer, and

(ii) a promoter region that allows specific expression in smooth muscle cells,

wherein said enhancer region and said promoter region are less than 1 kb apart; or

(b) a cassette according to claim 8.

12. (Amended) The vector according to claim 11, wherein said vector is a plasmid, a cosmid or any DNA not encapsidated by a virus.

13. (Amended) The vector according to claim 11, wherein said vector is a recombinant virus.

14. (Amended) A composition comprising the vector according to claim 12 and a chemical or biochemical transfer agent.

15. (Amended) A composition comprising the vector according to claim 13 and a physiologically acceptable vehicle.

16. (Amended) A cell modified by:

(a) a cassette according to claim 8; or

(b) a vector that comprises a hybrid promoter comprising an enhancer region of a strong and ubiquitous promoter/enhancer, and a promoter region that allows specific expression in smooth muscle cells, wherein said enhancer region and said promoter region are less than 1 kb apart.

Please add the following new Claims:

19. (Amended) The expression cassette according to claim 9, wherein the nucleic acid encodes a protein selected from the group consisting of a protein involved in the cell cycle, a protein that induces apoptosis, a protein capable of modifying the proliferation of smooth muscle cells, a protein that induces angiogenesis, and a transcription factor.

20. The vector according to claim 13, wherein said recombinant virus is derived from an adenovirus, a retrovirus, a herpesvirus, or an adeno-associated virus.